



Darby Public Schools

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RE: SB244 Committee Hearing

To the Committee:

Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill. And thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of this amendment.

As the Superintendent of Darby Public School I have identified the need for a pre-school in our community. The school already provides pre-school services for children with disabilities free of charge but, has been approached numerous times by parents of non-disabled children to be included. Primarily, in small communities this service is not readily available to non-disabled children because of the break-even cost point of the service. By and large, children do benefit from attending pre-school and that is evident in the academic and social skills preparedness they exhibit when entering kindergarten.

Sometimes a small number of non-disabled children may be included in programs for children with disabilities as peer models per IEP's (Individualized Education Plans). However, not every school district has the need to offer pre-school services for children with disabilities on an annual basis. On occasion a district may find it more feasible to pay transportation cost for a child with disabilities to a neighboring district if the number of children in need is small enough. Nonetheless, most schools already have in their inventory the supplies, facility space, educational manipulatives, and curriculum necessary to operate a pre-school.

Currently the Darby School District operates a licensed child daycare, the only licensed daycare in the community. This is a service welcomed by the young parents of the community, as the next nearest licensed child daycare is in Hamilton, 20 miles to the north. However, some parents do not need child-care services but would take advantage of pre-school for an hour or two per day.

The intent of this amendment is:

- To help offset the costs of operating a pre-school if a district chooses to establish one
- To allow a much needed service, especially in smaller communities, where private services are not practical or feasible
- To more clearly define the status of a free pre-school for a child with disabilities
- To align state statute with IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)